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FIVE-HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD PLAYS

Robert A. Johnston
Wright Junior College
Chicago, Illinois

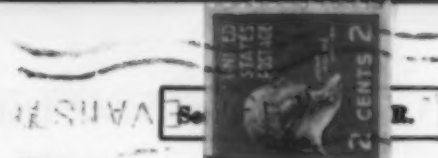
Mr. Johnston has given much time and work to the study of religious plays. The results of this study have been apparent not only in the finished productions under his direction but have offered very real help and practical advice to directors "in search of something worth-while". His book "Acting Versions of the Medieval Drama" will be published soon.

"Where are the good short religious plays?" everyone keeps asking. Many of the one-act plays currently being written are either thin and cheap in quality or else they are marred by lack of religious sincerity. A group wishing to present a play not merely as entertainment but as a work of art with a religious function often finds itself unable to get past the initial hurdle of finding a worthwhile play to produce.

One answer to the problem is to return to the early drama of the Medieval period. These plays are respectable as literature; they are always built around religious themes; they can be effective in modern production if staged simply and sincerely. Non-professional groups can do them well, for *they were originally written to be performed by untrained actors* and therefore do not present difficult acting problems. They require no scenery. They may use lighting effects, but they can be almost as effective without them. They need no front curtain as actors are never necessarily discovered on stage nor left there at the end of a scene. The only obligatory production feature is the musical background, and this can be easily produced either by a choir or by an organist. The most important qualification for a group in doing these plays is sincerity of purpose. The slightest hint of phoniness or artiness will completely destroy their effectiveness.

As plays, these early works are generally better than the religious drama written in our own day. Perhaps this is because the motives of playwrights have changed. The early dramatists had no desire for personal glory. Their names were unknown to audiences of their own day; later scholarship has not been able to discover who they were. Their purpose was not even the more praiseworthy one of serving

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PENNSYLVANIA

THEATRE VIA PHONOGRAPH

Sister M. Angelita, B.V.M.
Immaculate Conception Academy
Davenport, Iowa

The enjoyment of theatre via the phonograph record has become a reality today to many teachers and students of drama in our high schools and colleges. What a delight to be able to hear over and over again the theatrical treasures of our own or of a past age. The recording of some of the finest actors' work provides a stimulating means of arousing interest and enthusiasm in some of our best dramatic literature.

The most popular record in our department of drama is Judith Anderson's *Medea*. The girls are introduced to it while studying the history of the theatre, and it is a common occurrence to find them playing it again and again during their free time.

The ANTA albums run a close second in popular favor because of the established fame of the performing artists and the variety of selections offered: Helen Hayes, *Victoria Regina*; Katherine Cornell, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*; Frederic March, *Skin of Your Teeth*; Tulullah Bankhead, *The Little Foxes*.

Listening to the modern version of *Cinderella* by Alice Duer Miller is a joyful experience for young and old alike. Another record of this type is *The Eager Piano*.

Other selections with a high listening rate from our girls are *Peter Pan* starring Jean Arthur, *Peg o' My Heart* with Laurette Taylor, *Smiling Through* with Jane Cowl, *The Importance of Being Earnest* with John Gielgud, and *Cyrano* starring Jose Ferrer.

The newest additions to the record case are the Drama Quartette's *Don Juan in Hell* and *John Brown's Body*.

Most state universities are now providing splendid tape recordings. The University of Illinois, for example, has made available tape recordings of some of the finest plays that have been produced on professional radio. Examples of these are *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Macbeth*, *Mary of Scotland* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Dramatic productions of theatre classics, adapted and performed for radio and limited to 60 minutes in length, develop in young people a real appreciation of fine acting.

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(FIVE HUNDRED YEAR PLAYS Continued)

society through art. It was a higher motive: that of interpreting the ways of God to the common people. The great mysteries, the great lessons, the great rituals, and the great stories were dramatized in order to make them clear and meaningful to those who could not always understand the deeper and more scholarly forms of religious instruction. In other words, the early playwrights thought of their plays not as drama at all but rather as a method of teaching.

By now everyone knows that the drama has always evolved out of man's religious aspirations. Its earliest manifestations in any age or in any society are always regarded as forms of worship rather than as art for its own sake. The anonymous authors of *Everyman*, *Mankind*, the *York Resurrection*, the *Digby Conversion of St. Paul*, the *Brome Abraham and Isaac*, and others, were apparently untroubled by doubts or by complicated qualifications and reservations in teaching their faith to others. Where better to find answers to some of our twentieth-century strivings than in the production of these early works? Yet they tend to lie fallow in libraries, unread and unproduced, while mediocre and ineffectual modern plays are given hours of rehearsal and loving care.

The only possible objection to producing them today is that the language has changed. The characterizations are still real and believable; the plots, though simple and fragmentary, are well constructed; the content is still of vital interest to anyone concerned with religious and moral questions. Only the vocabulary is a handicap. Students who read these plays find them dull, not because they are dull but simply because the students do not understand Middle English. We may as well admit that only a group of specialized scholars would be able to produce or to appreciate these plays if they were given in their original words. Language changes through the centuries. The English of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is as foreign to us now as a foreign language. Perhaps it is an even greater barrier because it is, after all, English. We can still recognize more than fifty percent of the words. This misleads us into thinking we should be able to understand them all. Yet the plays do need to be translated into "acting versions" if they are to be clear to audiences today.

Translation from Middle English into Modern English has one big advantage over translations from foreign languages. It is easier to do. This does not mean that the translator will not face the problem of trying to write good idiomatic Modern English without destroying the original shadings of meaning. It does not mean that he will escape depressing feelings of inadequacy once in a while. These are disadvantages inherent in any translation process, and they will always be with us. We should not, however, give up and let these plays be neglected merely because of them.

In addition to the usual problems, three special translation problems are caused by the plays themselves. First, there is some difficulty in trying to preserve the charming and rather childlike naiveté of the original without falling into jarring modern colloquialisms or slang. This is not a serious handicap, however, if the translator will remember to keep the vocabulary direct and easy to understand. Moreover, this quality will ultimately prove a benefit in actual production. The extreme simplicity of the language will make it easy for an audience to understand.

Secondly, there is the question of whether the original verse pattern should be preserved. This is a harder problem. There is no "correct" answer to it. My own opinion is that if the translator has not had experience and some facility in writing poetry, he should not attempt a verse translation. It is better to have a smooth, accurate prose translation than an awkward verse translation which changes too many meanings and which twists natural sentence structure for the sake of the form. If the translator has had some practice in composing verse, however, and if he wishes to submit himself to the rigorous discipline of writing simple, understanding English in the form of the original, it will always be more effective than prose. Poetry, if not forced into a sing-songy delivery by the actors, can heighten the dramatic tension and provide a hidden rhythmic pleasure. Then too, it will more accurately preserve the original literary values of the play.

The third problem is that of what to do with certain comic crudities which today seem out of key with the prevailing tone of seriousness. This contradiction did not bother a civilization more naïve intellectually but stronger spiritually than ours. Modern audiences, however, will probably object to them. A simple way to solve this problem is to cut these scenes altogether. They are not integral to the basic action, and they will not be missed. A more difficult way is to leave them in to provide an element of richness of texture, but they must be toned down to prevent their destroying the unity of dramatic impact in the plays.

It may be argued that good acting versions of this type are rare. This is true. There need to be more of them, and some of us are beginning to devote some time to this important task. John Gassner, Martin F. Schloss, Mrs. Margaret Trinklein, and others, have already led the way. Moreover, there is no reason why an enterprising group should not make its own. The extra time and trouble taken in preparing the script will be more than compensated for by the rewards of producing a play which combines high literary merit with exciting theatrical effectiveness.

Where, in modern one-acts, is there the dramatic power of Abraham's conflict in the *Brome Abraham and Isaac*? Where is the emotional impact of the scene in which Death takes the child away from its

(Continued on page 3)

COULD THIS MEAN YOU?

Of course this may not concern you at all! If you're the kind of member who infuses others with the desire to share in the benefits and aims of CTC — the kind that is a credit to the Conference — you need not read farther. If, however, you are a "gimmie" member who values membership but doesn't care whether others have similar satisfaction, you will not take it amiss, we hope, if we remind you that the word Catholic is not used just to identify us as a group. Being Catholic presupposes an overwhelming desire to have others know and appreciate the same things we do. How would you answer the following:

—Have you brought any other group in to the Conference? After all, someone brought you into it. If you've valued and enjoyed this association, why be stingy about it? There's room for many more.

—Do you know of any group that doesn't belong to the Conference?

—Do you feel that membership would bring them benefit and the gratification of sharing in this important work of the Church?

—Do you know whether anyone has ever suggested CTC membership to them?

—Do you think that "anyone" might be you?

It's an idea! Ideas can bring real results! Will you try it?

(FIVE HUNDRED YEAR PLAYS Continued)

mothers in the Schloss version of *Totentanz*? Where is there a scene with greater dramatic beauty than in the final moments of the York *Resurrection* when the Gardener gently says to Mary:

Why do you seek His body only?
The soul, more than the body, is dear.
You could not save Him from His destiny.
His wounds would hurt you if He were here.
But His spirit shall help make mankind holy,
and what is cloudy He shall make clear,
and all who are lonely shall be happy,
and all shall be brave who are touched with fear.

Shortly following this speech, the Gardener reveals Himself to Mary as Our Lord Himself. This is one of the greatest "recognition scenes" in dramatic literature. Why do theatre groups let these rich dramatic treasures remain only in books while inferior one-acts are produced?

"Where are the good short religious plays?" Why, the best ones are tucked away in books and seldom produced. They have been available for more than five hundred years. They are merely waiting for enterprising production groups to bring them to life.

THE WELCOME MAT

Notre Dame Academy
Los Angeles, California
Disector: Sister Mary Louise

Parkside Players Guild
DePaul Settlement House
Chicago, Illinois
Director: Ellen Oliva

St. Gregory High School
Chicago, Illinois

St. Phillip High School
Chicago, Illinois

St. Francis Academy
Joliet, Illinois
Director: Sister M. Mercia, O.S.F.

Huntington Catholic High School
Huntington, Indiana
Director: Sister M. Josepha

Sister Mary Adella, O.S.F.
St. Paul School
Worthington, Iowa

St. Mary High School
Omaha, Nebraska
Director: Sister M. Catherine, R.S.M.

Don Bosco Community Players
Port Chester, New York
Rocco F. Stingone, Director

Mount Angel Seminary
St. Benedict, Oregon

Saint Rosalia Dramatic Club
St. Rosalia High School
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Director: Sister M. St. George, I.H.M.

Mother M. Aloysia, O.S.U.
Ursuline Academy
Galveston, Texas

Central Catholic High School
San Antonio, Texas
Director: Brother Charles Rahe

Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Director: Sister Mary Kevin

(THEATRE VIA PHONOGRAPH Continued)

And Shakespeare! The availability and prolific output of interpretations of his works by various artists would furnish enough material for a treatise on "Recording the Great Bard."

The Christmas spirit is beautifully interpreted in the following excellent platters: *The Littlest Angel*, Loretta Young; *The Lullaby of Christmas*, Gregory Peck; *The Christmas Carol*, Ronald Colman, Basil Rathbone, or Lionel Barrymore; *The Small One*, Bing Crosby; *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

In this time of rush and seeming satisfaction with the tawdry, it is reassuring to know that our students can be trained to find enjoyment in the treasury of the world's great literary masterpieces.

MEDIEVAL PLAYS FOR LENT

A recent article in *AMERICA* calls attention to the fact that more medieval plays could and should be produced by our college and university Drama departments. The author, Sister M. Brideen, R.S.M. of St. John's School, Independence, Iowa has gone into some interesting research in the field. The resultant article mentions possibilities and means of presentation. Among plays suggested is *THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC* which is included in the collection of "Fourteen Plays for the Church" by Robert Schenkken and Kai Jurgens. The collection is published by Rutgers University press 1948. Another play recommended is *THE MIRACLE OF THEOPHILUS*. This 13th century play, presented originally as a Lenten project by the students of St. Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana), was translated and adapted for presentation by Angeline Bouchard from the French text of A. Jeanroy with reference to the later text by Gustave Cohen. It was directed by Lucille Tonsfeldt. Produced in strictly medieval fashion, this is a worthy and rewarding vehicle for college groups. The story is the original Faust legend. The author, Rutebeuf, was a jongleur between 1250 and 1280. In his personality, style and writings, he was the forerunner of Francois Villon. The many scenes include Paradise, The Mouth of Hell, The Chapel of Our Lady, the Palace of the Bishop, the House of Theophilus, and the House of Salatin. Though it calls for twelve in the cast, many more can be added.

Members interested in further information may contact the central office which, in turn, has been offered further detail as a result of Sister Brideen's study of the subject.

* * *

The copy of *EVERYMAN* as presented by Loyola University of Los Angeles, graciously offered some months ago to our readers, did not reach our Library shelves in time to supply the several requests that followed the announcement. Several copies for the Library have been made and are now available to members.

The arrangement of this play was made by Ted deLay, director of Drama at the University. It carries costume designs for each character. Notes on production are generously set down throughout the script.

* * *

Another recent addition is the play *TOTENTANZ (THE DANCE OF DEATH)*. This play was translated by Margaret Trinklein from the German text of Martin F. Schloss who has kindly given us a copy for the Library. The text has been acted in many German cities by the Drama department of University of Heidelberg.

The reaction of twelve characters to the summoning of Death becomes the theme of the play which sets its scene in allegory upon "The Stage of Life." Like so many of the plays of the Middle Ages, *TOT-*

ENTANZ rejects confinement by time or space. From one side, the Door of Life, we see its characters enter — characters which differ in age, sex and social standing. As they pass across the stage of life, the personages encounter Death, the emissary of God, before they depart through the Door of Eternity into the world beyond, there to present themselves for God's judgment.

This is another excellent choice for Lenten presentation.

* * *

IDIOTS OF CLAY referred to before in pages of the Production Calendar, is another Lenten suggestion. Though not a Medieval play, it fits well into this category of plays and may be considered either a narrative fable-fantasy or a morality play. The play was written by C. B. Gilford, calls for only one setting, and has a cast of 13 speaking characters. This play was successfully premiered at St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.

PLAYWRITING CONTEST

Last year The Chicago Drama Festival announced a playwriting contest for high school students. Surprisingly a large number, approximately 25, submitted scripts. These are now in the hands of the judges and decisions will be made soon. It may be that none have value as finished plays but the important thing is that there is activity in this much neglected facet of theatre — activity at an early stage where it may be developed and do good.

Encouragement now, we believe, may bring more efforts and worthwhile results finally. If only one person out of this group is activated into further effort in this line, the project is well worth our encouragement and praise.

It is interesting to note too, that several schools have been encouraging production of plays written by their own students. St. Clara Academy (Sinsinawa, Wisconsin) probably heads the list in this respect. Students there have pooled their experiences and ability and the play has become truly their creation. Providence High School (Chicago) and Immaculata (Chicago) both produced plays written by students during the past year or more. The former presented "FRIENDLY ENEMY" written and directed by Stella Novielli last year and also featured original monologues by Mathilda Carlone. Alvernia presented *TO YOU, A SAVIOUR*, written by Rita Kowal and Betty Provendar which was later published by Row Peterson Company.

We are interested in knowing if other schools are encouraging their students to write their own material. This is at least a step forward in answer to that frequent question: "what are we doing about the dearth of worth-while material for our stages?"

HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

An Interview With EVA LA GALLIENE

by

Joan Parker and Mary Margaret Deal
Alvernia High School, Chicago

"Theatrical people are never late." That was the greeting we received from Eva LaGalliene when we arrived ten minutes late for our appointment — but, she proved friendly and not at all hostile. Feeling quite abashed because of our intolerable tardiness, we meekly followed Miss LaGalliene down the steps of the Blackstone Hotel to Kimball Hall, where she was appearing that night.

Warmth emanates from her, putting one at ease immediately. Her voice has a lyric quality which at once captivates full attention. She firmly believes in literature for literature's sake and much prefers a live audience to working before a television camera. If humanity, compassion and skill are requisites for a great actress, then Eva LaGalliene is one, for she simply radiates inspiration and deep insight.

Eva LaGalliene mentioned that although a theatrical career is constantly full of obstacles, it also gives one a sense of great achievement. One of the greatest services she has done for students interested in the theatre is the organizing of the Theater Master Works, together with Charles Green and Margaret Webster, who present excerpts and full length plays done on records (Decca and Atlantic.) These are of great help to students reading plays which are difficult to understand, for it brings life and emotion into them.

Miss LaGalliene has been awarded many important honors in the theatrical profession. She was the first woman to receive the gold medal of the Society of Arts and Sciences and she also received the Pictorial Review Prize.

One of Eva LaGalliene's greatest and latest accomplishments is the writing of her autobiography entitled, "With A Quiet Heart," published by Viking. It is a well balanced book, a story of courage and endurance and will appeal to every one interested in the theatre. Elliot Norton, Boston Sunday Post, has this to say, "She writes in a lively style which reflects a high and lively interest in almost every aspect of life."

Students should endeavor to read about and possibly see one of the greatest ladies of the theatre — Eva LaGalliene.

Send all
High School News Items to
Anna Helen Reuter
1050 Ardmore Avenue
Chicago 40, Illinois

HOW MANY CAN YOU ANSWER?

1. (a) What do the names, Julia Marlowe, and Edward H. Southern bring to mind? (b) Was 'Julia Marlowe' a pseudonym?
2. Who composed: (a) Iolanthe; (b) ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS; (c) the MASS IN B MINOR?
3. The GLOBE Theatre in London was one of two for which Shakespeare wrote exclusively. What was the other?
4. (a) Did Sarah Siddons or Alice Terry play with Valentino in the movie, THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE? (b) Who was known as the 'Tragic Muse'?
5. The widow of what noted musical comedy producer, formerly on the New York stage, is now a motion picture actress?
6. (a) Who wrote THE LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING? (b) Who played the male lead in it?
7. A certain English star just did an unusual role (for her) in an American movie, and opened on September 30 in TEA AND SYMPATHY, on Broadway. Who is it?

To check your answers, turn to next page.

News From the Texas Region

In Taylor, Texas, St. Mary's Drama Club won first prize in the school division of the Christmas Parade, with a WORLD UNITY float. The theme was a huge wreath encircling the Blessed Mother, the manger, and St. Joseph. Shepherds and angels were on each side of the wreath. Many nations were represented adoring the Christ Child. On the side of the float were the inscriptions — "Christ is Christmas. World Unity in Christ." The club will add the prize money to their chair fund for the auditorium.

St. Mary's Drama Club will sponsor a Play Festival of its own the first part of February. Directors of the one-act plays will be those who participated in the recent State Drama Festival. In this way each member will be given the chance to have a part in at least one play for the year.

In Ft. Worth, the OLV Players' Club invited the Philothespic Players from Jesuit High School in Dallas to present a one-acter on the OLV stage the evening RIDERS TO THE SEA, the festival play from OLV, was staged. Responding heartily, the Jesuit boys asked to bring two plays, a drama, SUBMERGED, and a comedy, THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER. The three plays made an appreciate audience more aware of Catholic Drama and its aims to uplift the theatre. Afterwards, the Jesuit Boys and the OLV girls enjoyed a get-together in the Campus House.

The OLV Players joined with the Choral Club in appearing before several city clubs and on TV with a Christmas program of songs and verse choir offerings.

Senior members of the Players will direct two one-act plays starring Freshmen members, to be produced sometime before Lent.

CROSS - COUNTRY CIRCUIT

HIGH SCHOOL

St. Agnes High School, St. Paul Minnesota

Sister M. Patrice writes: "One thing our Cue and Curtain Club is proud to report is that every single member has taken out a membership in the C.T.C." Sister goes on to report the following programs presented — A Choral pageant entitled HOLY NIGHT, Thornton Wilder's HAPPY JOURNEY, Booth Tarkington's THE GHOST STORY and Christopher Morley's THURSDAY EVENING.

St. Joseph's Academy, St. Paul, Minnesota

Sister Irenaeus, Director

On Wednesday, December 2, the Senior Genesian Players initiated the Juniors. The Seniors presented two one-act plays, SKIN DEEP and TELL DORIE NOT TO CRY, directed by the girls themselves. The Seniors have drawn up a constitution and written an initiation ceremony for C.T.C. Members.

On December 23, the Sophomore speech classes presented AT THE FEET OF THE MADONNA for the Annual Christmas assembly.

The Immaculate, Chicago, Illinois

Anna Helen Reuter, Director

A double cast is in rehearsal to present DOUBLE DOOR by Elizabeth McFadden on February 12-21. There will be a matinee for Sisters on Saturday, February 20.

Stanbrook Hall, Duluth, Minnesota

Sister Timothy, O.S.B., Director

A happy and excited group of thirty girls left Stanbrook Hall aboard a Greyhound bus, Friday, November 13. Though it was "Friday, the thirteenth," it was definitely not a day of bad luck for these dramatic club students bound for Holy Angles Academy and the sixth annual regional play festival.

On Saturday, November 14, the girls were part of a large crowd attending the play festival. Although Stanbrook students were not participating on stage but were only spectators, they enjoyed each critical analysis of the plays given.

Speech Festival at Alvernia High School
Chicago, Illinois

The speech classes and the debaters devoted an evening to forensics on January 18. All students were eligible to try out for participation in the programs which included dramatic and humorous declamations. Parents and friends were invited to watch as the students displayed their talents.

Providence High School, Chicago, Illinois

Therese Marie Cuny, Director

KNAVE OF HEARTS will be presented on February 15.

THE NECKLACE IS MINE and SANDALWOOD BOX, under student direction were produced in January. Student productions scheduled for February are GRAY BREAD, and an original play entitled STRANGE ARRIVALS, written by Stella Novielli, a senior drama student.

McDonnell Memorial High School

Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Sister Mary Susan, S.S.N.D. Director

A series of radio plays, beginning February 11, on the various apparitions of Our Lady will be the Marian Year offering of the Drama department.

St. Mel High School, Chicago, Illinois

Gerald Sullivan, Director

BULLY BUDD by Lewis Cox and Robert Chapman will be presented on the evenings of February 18, 19 and 21. There will be a matinee on February 20.

Mount Mercy Academy, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Sister Mary Anton, R.S.M., reports the following: "For the public we did THE CANTICLE OF THE NATIVITY by Rene-Richard Bechet. I think it is the most atmospheric Christmas play I have ever done. It really takes the audience back to the times in which Christ lived. For the National Council of Catholic Women we gave THEY THAT SIT IN DARKNESS by Dorothy Clarke Wilson. THE CANTICLE was presented by the Marcan Dramatic Club with the assistance of the Glee Club and the Grade Verse Speaking Choirs. THEY THAT SIT IN DARKNESS was given by the Junior Mercian Dramatic Club."

Loyola Academy, Chicago, Illinois

Walter Bamberger, Director

THE BAT — that popular mystery-comedy by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood — will be given three performances in February by the Loyola Drama Club.

Cathedral High School, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Sister M. Mathew, O.P., Director

For their class play, the Juniors presented YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU. This was in November. In December, the Glee Club and the drama students presented THE CHRISTMAS STORY. This consisted of cuttings from Rev. John Lynch's A WOMAN WRAPPED IN SILENCE.

St. Boniface High School, Coldspring, Minnesota

Sister Michaela, O.S.B., reports the Senior students are busily rehearsing MURDER IN A NUNNERY. It will be presented February 7 and 8.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE FIVE

- (a) Shakespearean drama, especially in America.
(b) Yes, she was really Sarah Frost Southern.
- (a) Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan. (b) Ditto.
(c) Johann Sebastian Bach.
- BLACKFRIARS Theatre.
- (a) Alice Terry. Sarah Siddons lived in the 18th Century. (b) Sarah Siddons.
- Billie Burke. (Mrs. Florenz Ziegfeld).
- (a) Christopher Fry. (b) John Gielgud.
- Deborah Kerr.

CROSS - COUNTRY CIRCUIT

COMMUNITY THEATRE

The Blackfriars of N.Y. are opening the curtain on **PRAISE OF FOLLY**. This play, the life of Sir-Saint Thomas More, is being directed by Dennis Gurney. The play opens on February 15 and, with the exception of Wednesday evenings, will play each night until April 13th.

The Parkside Players (Chicago) is being welcomed into the Conference this month. Theirs is an interesting and ambitious program, educational and recreational in aim. It is interesting to note that 55% of their enrollment are men and that the age range is an unusually wide one — from 16 to 53 years. This year, their ninth, they are staging **BARRETT'S OF WIMPOLE STREET**, **MOON OVER MULBERRY STREET**, **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**, **OUTWARD BOUND**, **CRAIG'S WIFE**, **MEDEA**, and **PYGMALIAN AND GALATEA**. Some one-act plays are also part of the program. All productions are staged for the benefit of De Paul Settlement House.

The Blackfriars of Dayton are celebrating their 15th anniversary this year. From a small beginning they have grown to a subscription membership of 633. Officers of the past and the present are to be congratulated on making this milestone. The effort, worry and planning that have made this possible are no little achievement. The Conference warmly congratulates the Guild on this occasion and asks that Father Raymond Schroeder extend to each member our wishes for continued success.

Their recent productions were **MARY ROSE** and **THE THIRTEENTH CHAIR**. They will present **IDIOTS OF CLAY** during the Lenten season.

Catholic Theatre of Mobile (Alabama) presented **MEDEA** during January. Our congratulations to the new president, Charles Burch. Father Anthony Zoghby is the moderator and John Heald the director of this energetic guild.

COLLEGE and UNIVERSITY

Catholic University (Washington D.C.) presents **MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL** March 19 to April 3. This follows the highly successful February production of **HARVEY**.

In late January the **DUBLIN PLAYERS** were featured at Incarnate Word College (San Antonio, Texas) in two productions, **PYGMALION** and **SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE**. This company, made up of actors from Ireland's famous Abbey and Gate Theatres, is completing its coast to coast tour. In March the college will present its own players in the production of **SONG OF BERNADETTE**.

QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS

Our sincere appreciation to the many who took time to answer last month's questionnaire. It has offered much practical help and has been a morale-booster to those of us who "wonder as we write."

You will, we believe, be interested to know that there was little difference of opinion in the answers. There seems to be unusual unanimity in choice of material. All favored inclusion of feature articles. Over 75% found the Production Work Sheets helpful. Almost all found them interesting.

About 25% had enjoyed the benefit of royalty reductions on several occasions; another 20% profited by royalty reduction at least once. We hasten to add that one royalty reduction a year can absorb the cost of your annual membership fee. Sometimes the reduction is sizable enough to save as much as \$25.00 for a producing group.

All of our subscribers conscientiously read the advertisements. 20% had purchased from the advertisers as a result of the ad, 30% stated that if and when they were ready to purchase the products advertised, they would patronize these companies.

All seemed enthusiastic for a section devoted to an interchange of ideas between members. As a result, this plan will be initiated in the March issue. The column will be called

Will you address such correspondence to "Just Between Us" Secretarial Office, 2644 Lawndale Avenue, Evanston, Illinois. Please send in any ideas, plans, questions you would like to ask or share with others.

Rev. John J. Ward, O.M.I. (San Antonio, Texas) reports that their seminarians have a Drama festival in which each class presents a play representative of the entire class' efforts. Each week another of these plays is produced and the faculty acts as judge.

DePaul University (Chicago) under the direction of David Itkin, presented **PYGMALION** during the month of December. Their January presentation was **ELECTRA**, directed by Bella Itkin.

The Rosary College Players will present Philip Barry's **HOLIDAY** on February 25, 26 and 28. Floyd Thompson is director.

Ardeleons and Johnny Players of St. Joseph, Minnesota presented **THE HEIRESS** in mid-January.

Mundelein College (Chicago) will present **VICTORIA REGINA** on February 12, 13 and 14. This production is under the direction of Mr. David Itkin.

PLAY PRODUCTION WORK SHEET

BARABBAS

By Michel de Ghelderode

Translated by Hugh Dickinson

Cast: Twenty-one men, four women, as well as many extra roles providing speaking parts for both men and women as beggars and rabble; also, non-speaking sentries and assassins. Much doubling and tripling possible. Christ is a non-speaking part.

Settings and Costumes: One interior, two exteriors. Settings can be greatly simplified by varying the elements of a unit set, or by adding set-pieces such as prison bars, balustrades, side-show tents. Costumes are Biblical, with some nondescript and grotesque attire; although in Europe, *Barabbas* has been staged successfully in modern dress.

Synopsis: "Whom do you choose — Jesus or Barabbas?" When the rabble chooses Barabbas, that notorious bandit cheats death on the cross. But he cannot enjoy his freedom; for, in his hunger and thirst after justice, he learns that Jesus' trial was cynically rigged; and that he himself is only a dupe of the high priests, whose black-robed assassins finally hunt him down and kill him. The tragedy of Christ's passion and death are focused in the drunken torment of the criminal's mind, haunting him, turning his freedom to ashes, and making his thirst for justice insatiable. He dies, whispering: "Jesus — my brother!"

Production: For the director, the chief technical problems of the play are its structure and its marked shifts of mood from act to act. The first act is shortest; the third, longest — directly contrary to what audiences unconsciously expect. The tension of Act I springs from physical conflict; that of Act II, from mob passion. But in Act III, where Jerusalem awaits the moment of Christ's death, the emphasis is heavily lyrical, requiring a totally different kind of dramatic tension. Thus, with audience habits in mind, the problem, as I have come to understand it, is to conserve and vary the amounts and kinds of suspense, in order to exploit to the fullest the extreme theatricality, both aural and visual, of the final act. Since the atmosphere called for in it is grotesque and nightmarish, and the opportunities many, Act III could be staged expressionistically for shock effect. (This seems to have been Ghelderode's original intention, and it is the style which the Belgian National Theatre is using in its revival of the play this winter.

The dramatist's ground plan for Act II, calling for the rabble to be placed upstage behind a high platform, was found to be unworkable. If the director reverses the ground plan and brings on the rabble at the footlights, he will, of course, increase the amount of blocking, business, and drilling he has to do; but he will actually simplify his problems and gain a striking increase in audibility, spectacle and

excitement. If a permanent unit setting is used, it is strongly recommended that Act III be framed behind a false proscenium designed to convey a feeling of lower depths and crushing weight, since the action here occurs in the slums of Jerusalem.

Act III contains a scene between Judas and Peter, where the latter reveals that he wrung the neck of the cock that crowed his denial. The business of the incident requires the use of a dead fowl as a property; it may also cause a "false laugh." By cutting a few lines, the action and the annoying property can be merely referred to. If the scene is done exactly as written, it should be played well upstage and partly masked.

The language of the play is one of its principal dramatic values. It varies widely from realistic slang to elevated utterance and even choral speech. So the title role — a long and arduous one — demands a tall, muscular, highly empathic actor whose vocal, as well as emotional, range is wide. Good voices are also essential for the parts of Magdalene, Judas, Caiphas, the Look-out, and the Apostles. If I were to restage the play, I should consider the Apostles fully as important, as say, the Women of Canterbury are to *Murder in the Cathedral*; and I should experiment with their use of stylized movements and groupings. Lastly, it will help the director, I believe, to think of Acts II and III in musical terms; the latter, particularly, needs to be **orchestrated**: not only voices with voices, but also voices with sound, and sound with sound. The sound man is a very important technician in *Barabbas*.

Publisher: The play is available in manuscript from the translator, whose address is: Dept. of Speech and Drama, Loyola University, 6525 Sheridan Road, Chicago 26, Ill.

Royalty: Twenty-five dollars a performance. For extended runs, special arrangements may be made.

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FESTIVAL NOTES

The annual LaCrosse Diocese Festival will be held at McDonnell High School (Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin) on Saturday, February 27th. Therese Marie Cuny will act as critic-judge. The eleven schools participating are:

- Aquinas High School
Director: Sister M. Theodata, F.S.P.A.
- Campion High School
Director: Rec. C. I. Prendergast, S.J.
- Columbus High School
Director: Sister Mary Terence, S.S.N.D.
- Holy Cross Seminary
Director: Rev. Albert Thomas
- McDonnell High School
Director: Sister Mary Susan, S.S.N.D.
- Maryheart
Director: Rev. Cletus L. Abts.
- Madonna High School
Director: Sister Ronald
- Newman High School
Director: Sister Mary A. Kempis
- Regis High School
Director: Sister M. Janet, O.S.B.
- St. Joseph's Academy
Director: Sister Marietta, S.S.J.
- St. Mary's Academy
Director: Sister M. Leonre, S.S.N.D.

HISTORY OF CATHOLIC THEATRE

The secretarial office receives, at least once a month, a request for early history of the Catholic Theatre in America. This is sought either for material for thesis, for class project, or for a feature article in some periodical. The files do, of course, carry some factual material on this subject but there must be many who could "fill in the cracks," could offer names, bits of news, clippings and information that would add much to the comparatively scant supply on hand. Certainly every detail that contributes to filling in the story is important.

In 1916 Katherine Bregy edited Juvenile Play Catalogue issued by the Catholic Theatre Movement. We have been unable to learn details of the movement at this time, beyond the fact that there was such a movement. Another meeting of the Movement is recorded in 1923 at Washington, D.C. These facts are interesting but offer little information as to type of activity, names and groups connected with it.

Would you comb through your files and your memory for such material and information as you can supply?

PRAYER TO ST. GENESUIS

A few members have requested copies of a prayer to our patron, St. Genesius. With the thought that many others may like to know of this prayer and have a copy, it is being printed here in the hope that others may wish to use it.

O loving Saviour, Who has placed us here that we might one day enjoy eternal happiness with You in Heaven, we offer our thanks for the many gifts You have granted us, and we promise that they shall be used only for Your greater glory and honor. The talent You have given us is one of great power. We wish to use it aright. Our ability to sway emotions, to direct thoughts and feelings is a power that springs from the goodness and generosity of Your Sacred Heart. When we stand upon a stage, those who sit before us are holding out their hearts and minds to take in what we have to offer. During those moments, we personally have a serious obligation. Therefore, we solemnly promise that whatever theatrical activities we may engage in during the course of our lives shall be in accord with the principles and teachings of our Faith, with the desires of Your dear Heart. At the expense of sacrifice of friends or position, we intend to keep this promise so that we shall never run the risk of wounding You. Grant that we may ever keep this in mind, remembering that our Catholic Faith is a protective armor and defense too precious to cast away or belittle by adopting the principles of the world.

Mary, our Mother, help us to keep this promise at all times, and especially in time of temptation. Grant that we may always act, both on the stage of the theatre and on life's broader stage, as is befitting a child of Mary. Give us your strength, your purity, and your courage, so that, when this brief act of life is over, we may merit your smile of approval, your welcome onto the stage of eternity. Amen.

Imprimatur

Samuel Cardinal Stritch

October 9, 1948



BOOK-IN-HAND PRESENTATIONS

We hesitate to suggest benefit performances for CTC. Those who can, have done so much in the past. Those who can't, squirm with embarrassment and disappointment over this inability.

Now, however, a suggestion from Emmet Lavery seems to suggest a way for many groups — one that is comparatively simple in plan and yet very worthwhile financially. Commenting on the recent benefit performance by Immaculate Heart College of Los Angeles, he states — "I wonder if many of our groups could not take on similar ventures as benefits — i.e., instead of full-scale productions, which take time and a lot of organized talent, something more intimate — the lost art of play reading, a la Drama Quartet, in the comfortable background of library or college lounge? I've always thought we neglect a great field here; with a good editor and a few good readers, we can have all the fun of theatre and dispense with a lot of the grueling work. Also try plays that are otherwise beyond us."

It's not only an approach to financial problems. It can be a challenging and interesting evening. Fun, too!

WHAT IS CATHOLIC THEATRE?

Reprinted from Production Calendar, 1943.

"The question of what is catholic," he Father Edward C. Joyce declares, "does not allow itself a brief nor immediate reply. The conclusions must be derived from an understanding of what certain basic terms in Catholic teaching mean and can effect . . . It follows that if we are to propagandize in the most seductive fashion, then we who work in the theatre medium must be fully cognizant of what constitutes effective action, the action that is worthy of Catholic name."

"The Catholic theater is a powerful weapon for forming minds and hearts in the mold of Christ. When we are convinced of our responsibility we shall, like the disciples, go and tell the things that we have seen and heard. We shall live basic catholic attitudes for others to observe, judge, and act."

INFORMATION, PLEASE!

We are wondering if some of our readers can supply information on the following plays:

DAY STAR RISING

PRELUDE TO FRANCE (by Vivian Johannes)

AND IT IS NOT LAWFUL (Rev. Nelson Logal)

If you can fill in the names of playwright or publishers, we shall be very grateful.

BEG PARDON

We regret failure to have named the contributor of the interesting and worth-while review of books on Theatre in last month's issue. The review, entitled "Have You Read . . ." was written by Sister M. Agnese, S.P. of St. Agnes Academy (Indianapolis). Sister asked us to omit name but we know that our readers wish to know "who's who" in our columns.

SPRING PLANS

Those planning Spring productions may be interested in the following three-act additions to our CTC Library:

CLEMENTINE	Anne C. Martens
HOME, SWEET HOMICIDE	Ann Reynolds
JUDY TAKES OVER	Dora McDonald
WHAT A LIFE	Clifford Goldsmith

May we suggest that, in requesting plays from the Library, you list as many as you wish but in the order desired. While it is only possible to send three at one time, there is the possibility of some or all of these being out on loan. If you have other requests, Sister Mary Ruth, our librarian, can send these until the first requests are again available.

Your request for plays will be answered sooner if you address the CTC Library direct at 2070 Live Oak Drive, Los Angeles, California, rather than sending it to the secretarial office where it must be forwarded.

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